

## Message Text

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10  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02

AID-05 SSM-03 OMB-01 SAB-01 DHA-02 ORM-02 IO-13 /086 W  
----- 047079

R 161828Z JUL 76  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1175  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6337

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, MILI, LE  
SUBJECT: RAS BEIRUT CITIZENS ORGANIZE THEMSELVES

1. SUMMARY. CITIZENS GROUP, WHICH HAS BEEN WORKING WITH TATAH IN RUNNING MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN RAS BEIRUT, HAS REPORTEDLY SIGNED AN AGREEMENT WITH FATAH FOR LATTER TO ABANDON ITS ROLE THERE. HEAD OF THIS GROUP, COMPOSED ESSENTIALLY OF AUB GRADUATES, BELIEVES THAT ARAFAT WANTS TO TURN OVER NEW LEAF. END SUMMARY.

2. I WAS INFORMED TODAY BY GEORGE SABRA, A LEADING PROTESTANT FIGURE IN RAS BEIRUT (AREA AROUND AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WHICH REPRESENTS ABOUT 20 PERCENT OF WEST BEIRUT), THAT HE AND OTHER AUB GRADUATES HAVE ORGANIZED THE "CITIZENS FRONT FOR RAS BEIRUT." THIS ORGANIZATION HAS DURING THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS TAKEN OVER OPERATION OF MUNICIPAL SERVICES, SUCH AS BARBAGE COLLECTION, BAKING OF BREAD, DISTRIBUTION OF SUPPLIES AND CIVIL DEFENSE. FIVE SUBCOMMITTEES WORK CLOSELY WITH ALL ARMED MILITANT GROUPS, INCLUDING VARIOUS PALESTINIAN FACTIONS, COMMUNISTS AND MURABITOUN. AS A RESULT, RAS BEIRUT HAS SUFFERED LESS THAN OTHER PARTS OF THE CITY FROM CRIME AND SHORTAGES OF SUPPLIES.

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3. SABRA SAID HIS ORGANIZATION WORKS CLOSELY WITH FATAH, AND

INDEED DRAWS MOST OF ITS SUPPLIES FROM FATAH. HOWEVER, THESE SUPPLIES HAVE BEEN FAST DWINDLINNG AND QUANTITY OF FLOUR AND BREAD IS ONE-THIRD OF WHAT IT WAS A MONTH AGO. ARRANGEMENT WITH FATAH IS THAT IN RETURN FOR DRAWING FLOUR SUPPLIES FROM FATAH'S STORES AT SABRA CAMP, FRONT BAKES BREAD FROM THE FLOUR WHICH IT THEN PROVIDES TO FATAH.

4. SABRA CLAIMS A SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT HAS OCCURRED IN LAST FEW DAYS. HE STATED THAT FAROUK KADDOUMI, FATAH LEADER, HAS SIGNED AGREEMENT WITH THIS RAS BEIRUT ORGANIZATION, IN THE PRESENCE OF PRIME MINISTER RASHID KARAME, UNDER WHICH RATAH WOULD ABDICATE ALL ITS RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ADMINISTRATION OF RAS BEIRUT. KARAME HAS UNDERTAKEN TO ACTIVATE GENDARMERIE, WHO HAVE BEEN SITTING AT HOME FOR LAST SEVERAL WEEKS RECEIVING THEIR PAY. IN INTERIM BETWEEN WITHDRAWAL OF FATAH SECURITY FORCES AND ACTIVATION OF LEBANESE GENDARMERIE, PLA WILL PROVIDE SUPPLEMENTAL PROTECTION.

5. SABRA IS VERY ENCOURAGED BY THIS DEVELOPMENT AND BELIEVES (PERHAPS NAIVELY) THAT FATAH WILL LIVE UP TO ITS AGREEMENT. SINCE FATAH PAYS THE OTHER VARIOUS DISSIDEPT FIGHTING ORGANIZATIONS LIVING IN WEST BEIRUT, SABRA BELIEVES THAT AS SOON AS FATAH STOPS PAYING THEM, THEY WILL FADE AWAY. (OTHERS ARE LESS OPTIMISTIC THAT THIS WILL HAPPEN. FOR EXAMPLE, I AM TOLD THAT THE PPS HAS ESTABLISHED ITS OWN SECURITY FORCE IN PARTS OF WEST BEIRUT AND NO DOUBT WILL VIE WITH KARAME'S GENDARMERIE FOR EXERCISE OF PRIMARY POLICY AUTHORITY. FURTHERMORE, GENDARMERIE CAN NOT RPT NOT BE EASILY ACTIVATED WITHOUT HAVING PROPER EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE.)

6. SABRA CLAIMS THAT REASON ARAFAT DID NOT GO TO DAMASCUS TODAY WAS THAT HE WAS INTERCEPTED BY ABU IYAD AND JUMBLATT, WHO TALKED HIM OUT OF IT. INSTEAD, LESSER LIGHTS WILL GO TO PREPARE GOUNDWORK, INCLUDING CAREFULLY WORKED-OUT AGENDA. SABRA BELIEVES THAT ARFAT HAS FINALLY REALIZED RASPUTIN-LIKE NATURE OF JUMBLATT AND THAT HE HAS FINALLY CAUGHT ON TO JUMBLATT'S BLUFF. ARAFAT, HE BELIEVES, REALIZES PLO'S MISTAKE IN ARROGATING TO ITSELF POWER IN LEBANON AND WANTS TO EXTRICATE FATAH FROM THE MORASS IT IS IN. (HIJAZI, EDITOR OF ARAB WORLD, ON THE OTHER HAND, BELIEVES ARAFAT IS STILL IN CAHOOTS WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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JUMBLATT AND IS UNLIKELY TO MAKE ANY DEAL WITH SYRIANNS AT THIS TIME.)

7. COMMENT, THIS IS SECOND TIME WE HAVE HEARD ABOUT COMMUNITY EFFORT IN RAS BEIRUT TO ORGANIZE MUNICIPAL SERVICES. (BEIRUT 6277) INTERESTING FACET IS THAT PRIME MOVERS ARE GRADUATES OF AUB, PRESUMABLY INFLUENCED IN THEIR ACTIONS BY THEIR BACKGROUNDS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT OTHER PARTS OF WEST BEIRUT

ARE TRYING TO FOLLOW SABRA'S GROUP'S EXAMPLE. SABRA BELIEVES  
THAT HIS INFLUENCE ON FATAH DERIVES IN PART FROM SERVICES AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL HAS RENDERED TO FATAH IN TREATING FATAH  
WOUNDED. SABRA REPORTS THAT WHENEVER FATAH HAS DRAGGED ITS FEET  
IN COOPERATING WITH THIS GROUP, HE HAS THREATENED TO CLOSE  
HOSPITAL. THIS HAS ALWAYS HAD DESIRED RESULTS.  
SEELYE

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